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Albany to Limit the Disclosure of Teacher Evaluations

By THOMAS KAPLAN

ALBANY — Siding with teachers' unions over the administration of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the New York State Legislature on Thursday approved a plan to limit the public disclosure of teacher evaluations.

Under the plan, unveiled by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo shortly before midnight on Monday, parents will be allowed to see the evaluations of their children's current teachers, but the public will be allowed to see evaluation data only with the names of the teachers removed.

The approval of the measure, on the final scheduled day of this year's legislative session, came three months after lawmakers approved a new statewide teacher evaluation system. School districts are required to put the evaluation system in place by January or they will lose their share of an increase in state education aid.

Teachers' unions had urged the lawmakers to prevent broad disclosure of the evaluations after a court in February allowed the public release of evaluation data for about 18,000 New York City schoolteachers. The data had been requested by news organizations, including The New York Times, under the state's Freedom of Information Law, and the release of the information angered teachers and their unions.

The deal heads off what would have been another debate over evaluations in August, when performance data for fourth- through eighth-grade teachers of math and English around the state would have been subject to release.

"What happened in New York City had a profound effect on the elected officials," said Michael Mulgrew, the president of the United Federation of Teachers. "They said, 'We don't want that to happen. That's wrong.' The only person I knew who didn't want it was the r —"

Mr. Bloomberg has repeatedly advocated the unfettered release of teacher eva

"I believe that parents have a right to full disclosure when it comes to informat child's education, and I am disappointed that this bill falls short of that goal," h

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statement. He added, "However, I do appreciate the governor's insistence that the State Education Department post school data so that parents can analyze how districts perform, and that teacher, principal and school information will be made widely available online."

Mr. Cuomo's bill is not as restrictive as the unions had wanted. But they cheered his proposal nonetheless, because it would block the wide release of evaluations with teachers' names attached.

"I'm glad it's over," said Richard C. Iannuzzi, the president of New York State United Teachers.

"This is all very virgin territory, whether it's the new evaluation law or this piece of the process," Mr. Iannuzzi said. "So I guess we're going to need to watch it and see how it plays out."

Under the measure approved Thursday, the State Education Department will be required to make public detailed evaluation data on its Web site, but without the names of teachers. Parents, while being permitted to see the evaluations for their children's teachers, will not be able to see the evaluations of the teachers who, for example, might teach their children the next year.

The Senate, after a discussion that lasted just six minutes, approved the measure, 58 to 1, on Thursday afternoon. The Assembly, after a long debate that revealed some discomfort with the idea of teacher evaluations, overwhelmingly approved the measure later in the afternoon.

"This is a work in progress, which is frustrating to a lot of us, as well as to the people who are affected by it," said Senator John J. Flanagan, a Long Island Republican and the chairman of the Education Committee. But, agreeing that the bill was sensitive to the rights of both teachers and parents, he added, "This is a step in the right direction."

But Assemblyman Steven F. McLaughlin, a Republican from the capital region whose wife is a kindergarten teacher, predicted that parents would post the teacher data they receive on the Internet for all to see.

"I already went to GoDaddy.com — you can get teacherscores.org or .net, that's available, you can grab that," Mr. McLaughlin said. He added, "It seems like we've got the torches and the pitchforks and we're coming after the teaching profession."

At a news conference, Mr. Cuomo said he felt the measure struck "the right balance" between privacy and disclosure, and thanked lawmakers for taking it up at the last minute.

"I'm grateful and appreciative and I think they did the exact right thing in passing the bill," Mr.

Cuomo said. "I didn't know that they would, but I applaud them for doing it."